



**For Immediate Release**

Easton, MD – March 24, 2022

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**Talbot County Council Meeting Highlights, Tuesday, March 22, 2022**

*These highlights only reflect the business items covered from the Council's approved agenda. To view the complete County Council meeting, please visit: Talbot County Meeting Videos - Talbot County, Maryland ([www.talbotcountymd.gov](http://www.talbotcountymd.gov)).*

**I. PROCLAMATIONS:**

**Recognition of ICU Nurses – UMMS – Shore Regional Health – Luanne Satchell, MSN, RN, Manager, ICU/Neuro/Telemetry and Dr. Peyman Otmishi, Pulmonology and Internal Medicine, UMMS – Shore Regional Health; Dr. Andrew Vranic, Medical Director, ICU.**

The Council unanimously approved a proclamation in recognition of the intensive care unit (ICU) nurses at the University of Maryland Medical System Shore Regional Health who dedicated months of sacrifice to the Talbot County community to care for their neighbors, friends, loved ones, and total strangers. The proclamation noted that “Nurses are a vital part of healthcare delivery systems around the world. ICU nurses are highly specialized trained nurses who have completed thousands of hours of clinical experience and/or additional educational requirements to provide care to patients who are extremely ill or injured who are fighting for their lives. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, all medical professionals, particularly ICU nurses, have gone above and beyond the circumstances for which they trained in order to provide care to the enormous number of patients hospitalized due to COVID-19, while also caring for patients hospitalized by other circumstances, putting their own lives, and sometimes possibly the lives of their loved ones at risk in order to honor their commitment to their fellow human beings.”

Dr. Peyman Otmishi, stated, “For the past two years, the COVID pandemic has been increasingly onerous to our health care system nationwide. The pandemic has exhausted our resources and challenged our will to fight. But in no small part to our nursing heroes, we have endured and beaten every surge of this pandemic. Since the intensive care unit takes care of many of the sickest patients in the hospital. The nurses in the ICU have stepped up to this challenge and worked harder than ever before. Often, we were understaffed, leading to working extended hours and taking care of more acutely ill patients than ever before. This is despite the nurses having their own families and children in their own homes. It certainly takes a special person to take care

of these critically ill patients who no longer have any control of the fate of their life. These men and women are heroes, my partners and I are proud to join our County Council to honor them as heroes.”

**Proclamation: International Transgender Day of Visibility – March 31, 2022 – Tina Jones, Chair, Board of Directors, Delmarva Pride Center and Lisa Barry, Member Board of Directors, Delmarva Pride Center**

The Council unanimously approved a proclamation in recognition of International Transgender Day of Visibility – March 31, 2022, which, each year, celebrates transgender representation, activism, and equality and honors the courage of transgender people around the world to live openly and authentically, while also raising awareness around the discrimination transgender individuals still face. This year there will be a Pride Festival in Easton on the weekend of June 17, 2022.

Tina Jones, stated, “We serve not just the transgender community but the LGBTQ community for the entire Mid Shore area. One of the things that we coordinate is a transgender support group that meets in Easton on the third Tuesday of every month at 6:30 p.m. at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship. Ms. Jones stated that it's time for us just to come together and reach out and get to know each person as a person first before we pass a judgment.”

**II. Board of Health Update – Maria Maguire, M.D., Talbot County Health Officer –**

Dr. Maguire presented a broad overview of several important health issues in Talbot County, including an update on infectious diseases.

**COVID Update:** Dr. Maguire stated that Talbot County, as well as other locations in the state, are seeing a steady decline in new cases of COVID-19 cases and its positivity rate has also declined. During the Omicron peak, Talbot County was seeing approximately 30% of COVID-19 tests came back positive, compared to approximately 3% at present; hospitalization rates and deaths have also declined statewide. Dr. Maguire noted the wide availability of testing is and the distribution of tests to libraries and other community venues. The Talbot County Health Department will continue to operate its own testing site five days a week at the Talbot County Business Center for the next several months.

If they are sick and have been exposed to COVID, they should get tested and wear a mask for five days. If they have a positive COVID test, it is recommended that they isolate for five days at home so as not to spread it to other people. After that five days, they should wear a mask when they are in public settings. There are still requirements at the present time to continue to wear a mask in certain settings, including traveling on an airplane and in a healthcare setting. Individuals will probably need to get tested in order to arrive at their destination and then when they return to the U.S., they need a test within 24 hours in order to board their plane. Currently, there are no COVID outbreaks in Talbot County. Dr. Maguire outlined several therapeutic treatments for COVID-19 and specifics related to each.

Dr. Maguire spoke about ongoing research related to possible long-term effects of COVID-19, including an increased risk of heart issues like heart attacks, strokes, rhythm issues, heart inflammation, such as myocarditis and pericarditis, and heart failure, even in individuals who sometimes weren't that severely sick or hospitalized. Symptoms of long COVID include fatigue, shortness of breath, and brain fog, which can sometimes last for months. Since long COVID is less likely to occur in vaccinated individuals, the Health Department is recommending people get vaccinated. Additional complications include neurologic issues like cognitive impairment, which is higher in COVID survivors a year after infection than in people who did not have COVID of similar age and background. Dr. Maguire stated that this is an issue in Talbot County where we have a lot of seniors creating increased demand in care for dementia. There has also been a significant increase in people reporting stress, anxiety, depression, and insomnia symptoms but a special workgroup has been set up in the county to deal with mental health issues since the pandemic. Dr. Maguire concluded her comments regarding COVID-19 by stating that applications have been from Pfizer and Merck to the FDA for a fourth booster but it has not been approved. Children under the age of five still are not able to get vaccinated against COVID, but they are likely to get approval in April for this age group.

#### **Influenza Update:**

Dr. Maguire provided an update on influenza is in the U.S., especially in the central and south-central US; the predominant strain of which is Flu A (H3N2). The country is seeing more hospitalizations this season than last season, but much fewer than in the previous pre-pandemic seasons, stating that most likely it is the protective effect of social distancing and masks. Maryland is definitely in the minimal range for influenza but because of COVID, the schedule for influenza outbreaks has been different. There are vaccines, therapeutics, and antivirals for flu. The rate of vaccination against flu is a lot lower than it usually is so the Health Department wants to remind people that the flu vaccination is very important.

**Tuberculosis Update:** Dr. Maguire reported on a recent outbreak in tuberculosis in Talbot County involving two individuals; the most recent outbreaks occurred in 2017 and 2010. Tuberculosis is extremely infectious and extremely serious. Some instances of tuberculosis are highly resistant to the treatments available. The county sees about five cases a year of latent TB where someone has been infected, but the disease is dormant.

**HIV Updates:** Talbot County reported at the end of 2020, 79 people were living with HIV in the county, putting the county in the middle range for the state. Over the past five years, there have been six new diagnoses. With appropriate medication, the majority of people who are infected can live more normal lives and manage their disease more easily. The Health Department tests for HIV and has purchased some mobile testing units that will also have the ability to test for hepatitis C soon.

**Avian Flu Update:** Avian influenza is a highly contagious airborne respiratory virus that spreads quickly among birds affecting poultry, like chickens, ducks, turkeys, and wild bird species such as ducks, geese, shorebirds, and raptors. H5N1 bird flu viruses have been detected in wild birds in 14 states and commercial and backyard poultry in 13 states. In Talbot County, there was a backyard poultry case in 2021 that was successfully treated. There are currently two outbreaks – one in Cecil County and one in Queen Anne's County at commercial poultry farms. This is the first outbreak since 2004 so State and federal officials have dramatically expanded their surveillance to protect the poultry industry on the Delmarva Peninsula. None of the affected birds enter the food system so there is minimal risk to humans.

Dr. Maguire noted, “Some Talbot County residents have backyard poultry so it's very important for owners of this poultry to wash their hands after interacting with their birds.”

**Other Updates:** Talbot County was able to get a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) so its Early Headstart Program could move into a beautiful new location on the Easton Elementary School campus. The County will have an open house for that location later this spring and is hoping to expand services to three-year-olds. They already have a waiting list. This week is LGBTQ Health Week and the Health Department is working to empower individuals in the LGBTQ community to know that they can access quality health care. National Public Health Week is April 4 – 10, 2022.

Council member Pack stated, “It's great news to hear that the Early Headstart program is finally in their own building after the County housed them many years ago. So, congratulations on that.”

### **III. Introduction of Administrative Resolutions:**

A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING TALBOT COUNTY TO FILE AN APPLICATION WITH THE MARYLAND TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION OF THE MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FOR A SECTION 5303, 5304, 5307, 5309, 5310, AND 5311 GRANT UNDER THE FEDERAL TRANSIT ACT

The Administrative Resolution authorizes the Transportation Plan as presented by Delmarva Community Services at the Talbot County Council meeting on March 8, 2022. Upon motion by Mr. Leshner, seconded by Mr. Divilio, Council unanimously approved the Administrative Resolution as presented.

A RESOLUTION OF TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND (THE “COUNTY”), AUTHORIZING THE ISSUANCE AND SALE OF CONSOLIDATED PUBLIC IMPROVEMENT GENERAL OBLIGATION BONDS IN A PRINCIPAL AMOUNT NOT EXCEEDING SIX HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS (\$600,000) PURSUANT TO THE AUTHORITY OF BILL NO. 1493 ENACTED BY THE COUNTY COUNCIL OF TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND ON SEPTEMBER 14, 2021 (THE “PUBLIC LOCAL LAW”), SECTION 10-203 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ARTICLE OF THE ANNOTATED CODE OF MARYLAND (2013 REPLACEMENT VOLUME, AS AMENDED) (THE “ENABLING ACT”) AND SECTION 623 OF THE CHARTER OF TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND (THE “CHARTER”), THE BONDS, TO BE DESIGNATED “TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND GENERAL OBLIGATION BONDS (ST. MICHAELS WASTEWATER SYSTEM BELT FILTER)”, THE NET PROCEEDS OF THE SALE THEREOF TO BE USED AND APPLIED FOR THE PUBLIC PURPOSE OF FINANCING OR REFINANCING REHABILITATION IMPROVEMENTS TO CERTAIN WASTEWATER FACILITIES LOCATED WITHIN THE COUNTY AS MORE PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED HEREIN, TOGETHER WITH FINANCING OR REFINANCING OF THE ACQUISITION OF ALL NECESSARY PROPERTY RIGHTS AND EQUIPMENT, AND RELATED ARCHITECTURAL, FINANCIAL, LEGAL, PLANNING AND ENGINEERING EXPENSES; PRESCRIBING THE FORM AND TENOR OF THE BONDS AND THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS FOR THE ISSUANCE AND SALE THEREOF AT PRIVATE SALE TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, ACTING THROUGH RURAL UTILITIES SERVICE, UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (“USDA”); AUTHORIZING THE CONSOLIDATION OF SEPARATE SERIES OF BONDS INTO ONE OR MORE BONDS;

PROVIDING FOR THE PROMPT PAYMENT OF THE MATURING PRINCIPAL OF AND INTEREST ON THE BONDS; COVENANTING TO LEVY AND COLLECT ALL TAXES NECESSARY TO PROVIDE FOR THE PAYMENT OF THE PRINCIPAL OF AND INTEREST ON SUCH BONDS, SUBJECT TO THE LIMITATION SET FORTH IN SECTION 614 OF THE COUNTY CHARTER; AND GENERALLY RELATING TO THE ISSUANCE, SALE AND DELIVERY OF THE BONDS

The Administrative Resolution authorizes the purchase of a belt filter press for the Region II Wastewater Treatment Plant located in St. Michaels, Maryland. The County has partnered with USDA on this project. Upon motion by Mr. Divilio, seconded by Mr. Pack, Council unanimously approved the Administrative Resolution as presented.

#### **IV. Introduction of Legislation:**

A BILL TO AMEND CHAPTER 24 (BOARDS, COMMITTEES AND COMMISSIONS) OF THE TALBOT COUNTY CODE IN ORDER TO ADD A NEW ARTICLE V ENTITLED “POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY BOARD AND ADMINISTRATIVE CHARGING COMMITTEE”

County Attorney Patrick Thomas explained, “The Maryland Police Accountability Act of 2021 requires each county to create a police accountability board and administrative charging committee. Much of the language of this bill is what's required under the Act.”

Council member Pack stated, “I just want to say my thanks to Sheriff Gamble, Chief Smith, Chief Maxwell and Chief Lowery. I know that this was all new to them. As Patrick indicated, most of the wording was already in place as included in State legislation. We just had a tailor some of it according to the way Talbot County wanted to proceed with it.”

Council President Callahan added, “I would also like to thank all the sheriffs and the chiefs who worked together with Patrick on this for the last three months. You've been working really hard to put all this together.”

Bill No. 1497 was introduced by all Council members. A public hearing will be held on Tuesday, April 12, 2022, at 6:30 p.m.

#### **V. Public Hearings on Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Projects: 6:30 p.m. – Mary Kay Verdery, Grants Administrator**

Talbot County applied for a CDBG grant in June of 2020 and executed an agreement with the Department of Housing and Community Development in August of 2020. The County received a \$250,000 grant from the State which was divided into two separate food programs: The county-wide program received \$150,000 and was administered by the St. Michaels Community Center (SMCC) and \$100,000 for the Senior Food Program.

The county-wide funds supported staff costs, kitchen equipment, food, and supplies to serve the low-to-moderate income beneficiaries. The grant required that 420 beneficiaries be served, 370 of whom had to meet the low-to-moderate income threshold. As of October 2021, they had met the beneficiary count, having served over 467 persons.

The Senior Food Program was administered by Upper Shore Aging through Brookletts Place, Talbot Senior Center. They received \$100,000 for food preparation, packaging and delivery to homebound senior citizens through the Meals on Wheels program. They were able to meet their beneficiary count of 30 within the first quarter of the grant cycle. The senior centers of Upper Shore Aging and the Meals on Wheels program continue to offer services to serve our local senior population.

Mary Kay Verdery states, “We want to say thank you to the staff and the volunteers of the St. Michaels Community Center, Upper Shore Aging and the Meals on Wheels members and also the community who helped to assist with volunteers with these programs as well. The County had the pleasure of working with Patrick Rofe, Executive Director of the St. Michaels Community Center, and Amy DeWitt, Food Director, and other SMCC staff to complete required reports and requisitions for this project. Childlene Brooks, Cheryl Knopf, Kim Porter, Jensen Vandyke, Gary Gunther, and other Upper Shore Aging, Inc. staff have provided grant administration and assistance to the County.

Patrick Rofe, Executive Director of St. Michaels Community Center commented, “I want to thank you for funneling that grant through our organization because there were 467 individuals served over the course of the grant which came to about 215,000 meals, or about 2000 meals a week that we were distributing at the peak of the pandemic last year. The year before we distributed about 500 10-pound pantry bags every week to the community, as well as over 500 meals to the community in the Bay Hundred area. And that hasn't abated too much – we are seeing new clients every week. The need is still there and we're very appreciative of the support. It's made a huge difference in our community.”

Representing Upper Shore Aging, Meals on Wheels and the Senior Food Program, Childlene Brooks added, “I cannot thank the volunteers enough because without them we would not have been able to do what we did. At the peak of the pandemic, we were sending out over 800 meals per week. This is just the Meals on Wheels and that's not counting the food pantry that we are doing in conjunction with St. Mark's United Methodist Church. But the volunteers came and they helped to pack the stuff they delivered. I mean it was just amazing. We're doing a little over 700 a week now. There are still people in this community that need meals and that are not taking advantage of it.”

Council President Chuck Callahan commented, “Thank you all. We really appreciate everything you do. You were valuable to the community.”

Council member Frank Divilio added, “Transportation has always been a hot button for me. I want our seniors to be able to stay in their homes as long as possible and be as comfortable in their homes as possible. We know that they can't always afford a car or don't always have the option to get out to get the food that they need. So, thank you for being there and organizing the volunteers to make sure that everyone can get a meal who requests one.”

Council member Pack stated, “Over the last two and a half years dealing with the COVID crisis, getting food into families' homes became a big push. I read a statistic not too long ago that you don't think about food insecure homes in agricultural communities because you think how they're growing the food they need. But, the largest block of food-insecure homes actually come out of our community. So, the work that you're doing is still vital. Although we're producing the corn, we're producing the grain and so forth. We still have a great need in the community for

those homes that are food insecure. I tip my hat off to you all for your great work. We appreciate it and we need you as a partner.”

Council member Price added, “I just want to give out a shout out to Mary Kay just because now that we can have somebody that's dedicated to just working on these grants and the block grants, I think it makes it a lot more efficient. And I think one thing that we learned through COVID is how much can get done. So, going forward, we have all the tools for how to get this done. It takes a team and we certainly have a great one.”

### **Update on Perkins Family YMCA/Bay Hundred Senior Center– Site work for the new senior center and YMCA located at 200 Seymour Avenue, St. Michaels, MD 21663**

Mary Kay Verdery stated that the County applied for Community Development Block Grant funding through DHCD in June of 2018, and the grant agreement was signed in November of 2018. The project was a 24,000-square-foot addition to the St. Michaels High School campus to be used as a shared space for the Bay Hundred Senior Center and the YMCA of the Chesapeake located on Seymour Avenue in St. Michaels. The CDBG grant offered \$200,000 for site work; other sources and State grants provided over \$8 million for additional site work, construction and project administration. The County entered into a sub-recipient agreement with Upper Shore Aging, and the YMCA of the Chesapeake in December of 2018. Grant funds were disbursed June through October of 2019. The agreement required 850 low-to-moderate income beneficiaries to be served. 288 of those beneficiaries had been served by December 2021. The mandatory closure of senior centers through the COVID crisis had an impact on some of the abilities to serve. Although the Senior Center hasn't met the number yet, they are continuing and providing the services. It was a relatively quick construction project from groundbreaking in mid-to-late 2018 to the ribbon cutting in June of 2019. Some of the new facility amenities include a central kitchen, dual dining room and gymnasium area, meeting space, warm water exercise pool, Wellness Center, exercise rooms, locker rooms, sauna, and childcare and nursery center. Governor Hogan did visit the Oxford and St. Michaels area and toured the new YMCA/Senior Center in August of 2021.

The completed Senior Center facility offers the opportunity for learning and socializing and gatherings. Due to the mandatory State closure of all the senior centers during the COVID pandemic, the Center got creative and offered classes through online services and zoom classes. The County coordinated with the DHCD to get the approval of the attendees of those online classes as beneficiaries to count toward their goal. So that was a creative way for them to still be able to provide some services. They offered several different classes, watercolors, knitting, and computer help. The opportunity for construction and future success of the facility is in large part due to community involvement. The facility was able to get grants through the Governor's Office and the County also provided financial and partnership support for this project. The County offered thanks to the program partners, support groups, and over 200 volunteers and donors.

Ann DeMart, Manager of the Bay Hundred Senior Center commented, “I want to thank you all for your support. It's been a challenge because we were closed longer than we were opened. We opened in June of 2019. We reopened in July 2021. We put off the reopening a little bit because they had summer camp programs going on. We want to make sure the seniors were safe. But people have returned in force. We're so happy and we've added some new programs. But the

best news is we've signed up 66 new members since we reopened. Part of that is due to some new programs we initiated, including tai chi and a new class called Aging Mastery – a 10-week program on how to enhance the later years.”

Robbie Gill, CEO of the YMCA of the Chesapeake added, “I just want to say thank you for your vision and leadership and willingness to think out of the box. This is the first model of this type where you've got a YMCA sitting on school property that is also a Senior Center. So, when we look way back in the day about a small community blending all that, it really works. While COVID has had an impact, I would tell you there are 2300 members of the YMCA in that community, in the Bay Hundred area. Between both the Senior Center and the YMCA, we are serving three out of four people in the Bay Hundred area. It is a model to lift up and has been lifted up at the state level by the Governor and the Comptroller. It is going to be replicated in Centerville, Maryland as they closed their Senior Center back in 2012. So, I just want to say thank you for your vision. I mean, it's a great model for a rural community and how you can work together to make an impact and I greatly appreciate it.”

Council member Price stated, “This facility is amazing. I am all for projects where we can multitask and work together with the community to be efficient. We have found a wonderful way to do that and it's amazing and it's going to be replicated. They should do them all over the place.”

Council member Pack added, “I remember those early meetings and I did not see this working. I didn't see how you could put a senior population in with a bunch of kids. And once we got around to listening to you to figure it out, it came out to be very, very successful. This is a model for other intergenerational partnerships around the state. So, hats off to all of you. You were patient with us until we found a way to make this work and so I'm grateful for your partnership.”

## **VII. Update on Connect Talbot Broadband Project – Hugh E. Grunden, P.E., President & CEO, Easton Utilities, and Steve Ochse and Ted Book, Easton Utilities**

Hugh Grunden presented information on Connect Talbot – Talbot County's Broadband Project. He explained that Talbot County is a competitive market space with multiple internet service providers, providing service mainly in populated areas. The partnership with the County has given Easton Utilities (EU) access to State and federal funding to resolve the lack of broadband in rural areas. Grunden provided a status update on the project and outlined the remaining gap in the funding which is a customer contribution, otherwise known as “a contribution in aid of construction.” He stated that this is a customer's share of their rural broadband infrastructure to bring the service to their property line. A second component of the customer contribution is the cost to install the facilities, particularly the fiber along long farm lanes or driveways, and private roadways. Many of these private roadways service multiple houses. This is something we did not have built into our project in the first iteration.

Grunden reported Easton Utilities' status with Connect Talbot, counting the County's initial commitment. The USDA reconnect grant of \$20 million for the Connect Talbot Project will enable Easton Utilities to reach 92%, of the unserved locations in Talbot County in the next 48 months. In January of this year, Easton Utilities applied to the State of Maryland broadband



infrastructure program for a grant of \$3.8 million to complete the final 8% of unserved locations.

Grunden states, “Our objective was to cover 100% of the unserved. We committed to you when we established our partnership to continue to pursue funding sources so we could get to that 100%. We are waiting for word on that grant which will help us reach those unserved areas in the western areas of the county – about 300 locations in Neavitt, Bozman, Claiborne, and Tilghman.” Grunden reported that approximately two weeks ago, Easton Utilities received final approval from the USDA for the reconnect contract. Throughout the county, multiple contractors are actively working on installing the backbone of this new fiber system. An interactive construction map is being added to the Connect Talbot website so customers can see where construction activities are actually occurring. As areas are ready for connection, customers will be able to go online and potential customers can go online and see when service will be ready in their area; this is the only grant that Easton Utilities secured that requires a customer contribution. Much of the cost associated with this project has been mitigated but Easton Utilities has been unable to find funding to alleviate this customer contributions requirement. Easton Utilities started securing all the materials necessary to construct this project years before it started – a move that has paid off now that there is a supply chain shortage and the price of materials has greatly increased. The total cost of these customer contributions and the USDA reconnect portion of the Connect Talbot project is \$4 million. Grunden requested the Council provide \$1.75 million of County American Rescue Plan Act funding to close this gap for the customer contribution portion of the project; a State block grant of \$1 million is anticipated and Easton Utilities has committed up to \$1.25 million in assistance. The \$1.75 million contributions by the County would eliminate this barrier to entry for the customers, enabling Easton Utilities to benefit all of its constituents in the county. Grunden added that time is of the essence in this request as customers are starting to sign up for service.

He concluded, “I am thrilled to come before you tonight and say we are well underway. Several years ago we talked about is this even possible, and it is and we're going to we're making it happen right now. What I would ask you to consider is relieving the county constituents the burden of a construction contribution in aid of construction, and these longer drops.”

## **VI. Discussion of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds and Results of Community Survey – Pete Leshner, Vice President, Talbot County Council & Cassandra Vanhooser, Director of Economic Development and Tourism**

Cassandra Vanhooser reported on the results of the Community Survey on the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) for which the County received \$7.2 million in funding. She introduced the members of the Task Force who worked on this initiative, including Council member Pete Leshner, Chair, County Manager Clay Stamp, Assistant County Manager Jessica Morris, Finance Officer Joye Nagle, Ken Calcagnini, Grants Clerk, County Engineer Ray Clarke, and Nancy Andrew, Executive Director, Talbot Family Network. Vanhooser commented, “We have been thoughtful, deliberate and thorough in our assessment of the opportunity that Talbot County has been given. And we're ready to make recommendations on the first portion of the funding.”

Vanhooser summarized the allowable expenditures for this money because it is somewhat narrow. These include investments in infrastructure, including water, sewer and broadband;

investments in public health; assistance to households and businesses to spur the economic recovery and to help those who need it; and investments in tourism to support targeted industries that have been hit hardest; and of course, economic recovery. Things the funds cannot be used for include tax refunds, pension plans, debt service or replenishing reserves, or anything that goes against CDC guidelines.

She outlined the timeline for the funds, stating that the first payment was received in May of 2021 which is the first half of the money. The County has until December 31, 2024 to encumber these funds and then until December 31, 2026, to spend these funds. The survey, which had 634 respondents, revealed the following:

- 52% of the respondents were from Easton, with responses coming from every corner of Talbot County
- BEACON at Salisbury University compiled the results and thought these were extraordinary results especially since we launched the week before Christmas and ended January 16
- Area identified for funding include infrastructure (expansion of broadband for education, remote work, and telehealth), public health (EMS station in the north part of the county, backup 911 Center, and improvements in our health department), assistance to households, and assistance to small businesses and nonprofits
- Other identified needs included a new hospital, the cell towers in remote parts of the county, multimodal transportation trails that take bikes and walkers, and education

She stated that the Task Force is recommending that the Council investment of \$4.5 million be to the following:

- \$1.75 million for broadband to underserved and unserved areas of the County
- \$105,000 for the Chesapeake Center to connect to County sewer due to a failing septic system
- \$1 million for the 911 center in the northern part of the county and EMS station (to offset the County's capital projects)
- \$300,000 for an ambulance for the Department of Emergency Services
- \$500,000 to the Talbot County Volunteer Fire and Rescue Association for a grant over 2 years to apply for equipment and other needs
- \$250,000 for a nonprofit grant fund
- \$150,000 to replenish the Food Banks
- \$50,000 for the Talbot County Free Library to upgrade audiovisual needs in the meeting room used by the community
- \$160,000 for a cybersecurity upgrade for Talbot County Government
- \$235,000 for administrative costs for personnel

\$2.7 million will remain in reserve to be used at a later date.

Mr. Leshner made a motion that the following expenditures be approved right away: \$1.75 million to Connect Talbot – Easton Utilities Broadband Project, \$500,000 be made for a grant fund through Talbot County Volunteer Fire and Rescue Association, and \$105,000 to the Chesapeake Center to address their septic issue and allow them to connect to County sewer. Council member Price seconded the motion. The Council voted unanimously to approve these expenditures.

Council member Pack added, “Great work. I probably want to look at some of these in a little bit more detail and we want to make sure that we’re checking back in with the citizens as far as what they want to see happen. So, well done.”

## **VIII. County Manager’s Report:**

- A. Board and Committee Appointments** – Mr. Stamp requested the reappointment of Glen Gannon to the Agricultural Land Preservation Advisory Board. The Council unanimously approved the reappointment. Mr. Stamp requested the reappointment of Marion Donahue, Lee Newcomb, and Ellen Taggart to the Commission on Aging. The Council unanimously approved the reappointments. Mr. Stamp requested the appointment of Tom Klein to the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board as the Town of Easton’s representative. The Council unanimously approved the appointment.
- B. Request from Department of Public Works Award *Bid No. 21-04, Talbot County Senior Center Parking Lot Expansion*** - The Council unanimously approved the award of Bid No. 21-04 to the low bidder, Duvall Brothers, Inc. in the amount of \$129,220.
- C. Request from Finance Office for Approval of a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Loan Resolution Related to the County’s Financing of a Replacement Belt Filter Press at the Region II (St. Michaels) Wastewater Treatment Plant** – The Council unanimously approved the loan resolution which is a second part to the Administrative Resolution adopted earlier this evening.
- D. Request from Easton Airport to Apply for and Accept Grant Funding from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) for Improvements to Runway Safety Area and Runway 4-22 Extension Program** – The Council unanimously approved the request to apply for and accept grant funding from the FAA’s Airport Improvement Program in the amount of \$1,885,261. Micah Risher, Airport Manager, reported that this is the airport’s annual submission to the FAA for the AIP funds from the Aviation Trust Fund. The airport has been self-sustaining since 1992. Grant funds will be used to design the full program for the Runway 4/22 safety improvements.  
  
Council member Price stated, “I like to remind people that these are not taxpayer dollars where we get grants for the airport. These Aviation Trust Fund dollars are from user fees from people who are actually out flying and part of your airplane ticket that you pay goes to that. The airport is a true enterprise department for us. There are no taxpayer dollar subsidies in this, it’s all generated from the revenue that you bring in at the airport. So, that’s why I love the airport so much. You do a great job and your predecessor did as well. But this is one thing that’s not a burden on the taxpayer at all, and I really appreciate that.”
- E. Request from Office of Law to Forward Letter to the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) in Response to Their Letter of February 3, 2022, Requesting Clarification of the County’s Position Regarding the Proposed Lakeside/Trappe East Project** – The Council discussed sending a response letter to Maryland Department of the Environment in response to their February 3, 2022 letter to the County Council and Planning

Commission about the proposed Lakeside/Trappe East project. Ms. Price suggested edits to the letter. The Council approved sending the letter to the Maryland Department of the Environment as originally drafted by a vote of 3-2 (Callahan, Divilio, and Pack voted yes and Price and Leshner voted no).

**F. Request from the Department of Parks & Recreation to award Bid No. 21-09, Master Plan** – Bill Burton Fishing Pier State Park – Talbot County, Maryland – Council unanimously approved awarding Bid No. 21-09 to the low bidder, A. Morton Thomas in the amount of \$55,464 and approved allowing staff to negotiate the best and final price with the bidder to meet the budget set for the project.

**G. Announcement of Regional Agricultural Scrap Tire Collection Event hosted by Mid-Shore Regional Landfill II in Caroline County – March 21-25, 2022 and March 28-April 1, 2022**

**H. Announcement of the Midshore Household Hazardous Waste drop-off day to be held on Saturday, April 2 from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Queen Anne's County Public Works facility. The event is rain or shine. For questions, please contact the Maryland Environmental Service at 443-685-4073 or the Department of Public Works at 410-770-8170.**

Council member Price reported on the MD General Assembly legislation. SB 986, which involved the pension for Corrections Officers in Talbot County, has passed. She testified on SB726 & HB1187 – Transportation - Highway User Revenues – Revenue and Distribution. This bill deals with restoring highway user revenues for local roads to the counties. She also updated the Council on the EMS bill which would pay for EMS transport costs to urgent care or being treated at the site. “They're not recognizing the savings when you don't end up having to pay for the hospital stay or the ER stay instead of a visit to the urgent care or something like that. We're working really hard to try to get them to recognize where the savings are on this bill.”

The meeting adjourned at 9:03 p.m. The next Council meeting will be held in person on April 12 at 6:00 p.m. in the Bradley Meeting Room.